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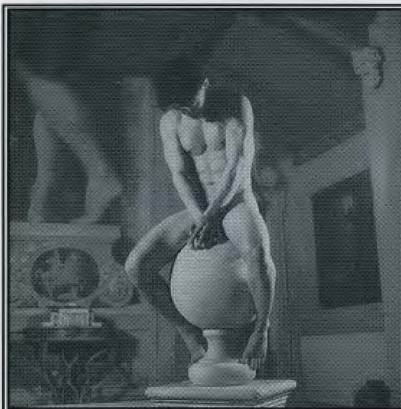
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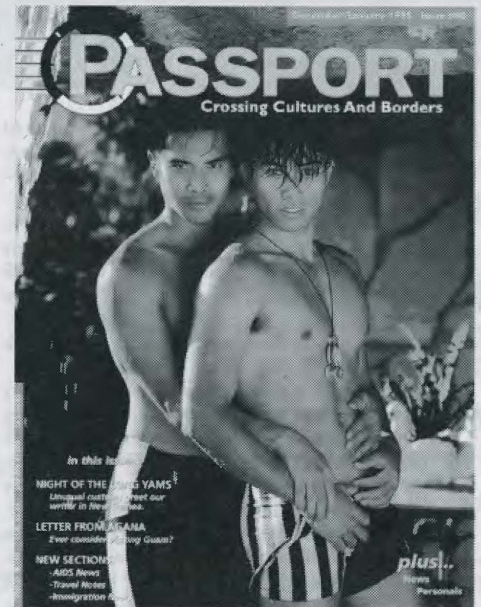
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# Editorial

HIV positive status is still the last closet for many of us.

**P**rofessor Roger Short of Monash University predicts that in five years India may replace Africa as the epicenter of AIDS. We are surprised, shocked, concerned. But to many of us, especially in the West, AIDS amongst South Asians is still the most faceless of diseases—affecting Bombay prostitutes and truck drivers. Never anyone we know.

I hear about AIDS everyday but little about South Asians living with AIDS. Then someone I knew by name dies and I hear it was pneumonia. And I wonder. Gay and lesbian South Asians are becoming more and more visible in the media. But HIV positive status is still the last closet for many of us, for many reasons—immigration issues topmost among them. But there is also a sense of shame coupled with a lack (however un-

intentional) of support. And of not knowing what to say when someone comes out as positive.

When my friend discovered he was gay, he reached out to groups like Trikone and found himself a circle of *desi* queers. He was more out than most people I knew—to his Indian friends, his family, even his grandmother. Then he found he was HIV positive. So he turned to South Asian AIDS action groups. And quickly found that most of their energies were focused on prevention. He said, without bitterness, that that was where the funding was.

But for someone HIV positive, in a foreign country, grappling with issues of immigration and medical insurance, the questions were endless. As they were for his parents, flying in from India, grappling with this dreaded disease they had only read about.

My friend is now showing the first signs of dementia. He forgets things. Like doctor's appointments, or the way to the store. But he remembers the day he found out he was positive. And how utterly alone he felt as he sat in his office and cried.

Shivananda Khan said that he was perturbed to see that in the three-day Pride Utsav '95 conference, there was only one workshop on HIV/AIDS issues. That again stems from our invisibility—we don't think of South Asians when we think of the AIDS Quilt or ACT-UP. When a South Asian HIV/AIDS action group was forming in San Francisco, several people asked, "Why do we need it? How many South Asians do you know that are HIV positive?"

The problem is until we *try* to know, we will never find out.

*Sandip*

Trikone Magazine

## trikone

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Trikone (*tri* as in trim, *kone* as in cone, Sanskrit for triangle) is a non-profit support and social group for lesbian and gay South Asians. (South Asia includes Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Burma, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Tibet.) Founded in 1986 in the San Francisco Bay Area, Trikone is the oldest group of its kind in the world. Trikone's goal is to bring women and men of South Asian heritage together in a friendly, supportive, and non-judgmental environment, and to promote awareness, visibility, and acceptance of alternative sexuality in society. Trikone proudly affirms both its South Asian identity as well as its sexuality. Trikone opposes sexism and any other kind of discrimination.

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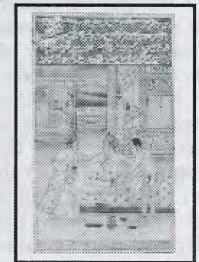
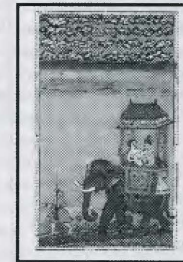
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All letters sent to *Trikone* are considered for our Letters pages unless you specifically ask us not to. We only publish first names, unless otherwise indicated. Letters written a pseudonym are also acceptable. Unsigned letters, however, are not eligible for publication. Please send letters to P.O. Box 21354, San Jose, CA 95151-1354 or by e-mail to [trikone@rahul.net](mailto:trikone@rahul.net).

## Coming Out Pains

I found your editorial on coming out to parents (July 1995) very moving. I still haven't told my parents but there is this horrendous unrelenting pressure on me to go back this year to get married. The letters are beseeching, threatening, angry, and very emotional. My relatives and sisters blackmail me emotionally. Everyone seems to think that I have become a hard-hearted monster, and as you wrote, "I have suddenly grown a second head."

It is so hard at times to go through this. I am lucky to have a strong, understanding, and loving partner. My parents are taking a very hard line. I have always been the most dutiful and obedient son until now. They have no apparatus to understand what is happening and how to deal with it.

I too get very angry many times and want to break away from it all, to shake people out of their way of seeing things, to make them realize how much unnecessary hurt it all causes. I know I will have to be extremely strong now and see myself and others through all this. I get a lot of strength from the fact that even though my heart breaks into little pieces every time I think of the pain my parents feel, I cannot marry and ruin an innocent life. I love my partner and want to spend my life with him. I respect and love my parents immensely but I have to lead my own life—otherwise it's not worth living.

Deepak, Australia

## The Eldest Daughter

I recently bought *A Lotus of Another Color* and was very excited to have finally found a book of writings from gay, lesbian, and bisexual women and men who are In-

dian! I have so desired to find other women and men who are like me.

I am a bisexual Indian woman currently studying in Virginia and away from family pressures. I came out to myself about two summers ago. Now that I have finally accepted that I am bisexual, I am trying to find out how all this fits in with my Indian life. There really isn't anyone here who is gay and Indian with whom I can talk.

I am 22 and the time is nearing where Hindu traditions say I must marry. Alas, I am at a loss. I cherish my Indian heritage and adore my parents. I just don't know what to do.

I have come out to my younger sister and she was fine with my sexuality and said she would support any decision I made. My older, extremely homophobic brother has told my sister he thinks there is something "funny" about me. I believe he knows but I am too scared to say anything to him for fear of what he may do. Our customs are very important to him as they are to me. We are the eldest son and eldest daughter of the eldest son (my father) in our family. So basically, this means everyone else looks up to my brother and me. I hate the idea of holding the honor and fate of my extended family in my hands. I don't want to let them down nor do I want to do anything that I won't be happy with.

I guess I just need some sympathetic ears to listen to me. I want to know, understand, and discover whether or not I can live as both a bisexual and an Indian woman.

S, Blacksburg, Virginia

## Transsexual Voices

I was very pleased to read Anne Ogborn Hijra's article in the July issue. I understand this issue personally because I am a female-to-male transsexual. Most Indians



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are familiar with male-to-female transsexuals, but few, if any, of us are familiar with female-to-male ones. My own unfamiliarity meant it took me until I was 30 to realize what exactly was different about me.

Growing up, I knew I was a boy, but society said that was physically impossible. I wondered if I was bisexual or a lesbian, mostly because they were the only labels society could give me. Even so, I knew I was not a lesbian. A lesbian is first and foremost a woman. Her self-image and personality are female. In fact, as the great lesbian poetry published in *Trikone* will attest, lesbian women enjoy being female. For me the whole idea of sex was confusing. So I was celibate.

Finally, three years ago, I read an article by a male-to-female hijra. I realized her thoughts and feelings were exactly like mine except I knew that I was a man born with a female-appearing body. So I went to a psychologist who specializes in this area and began the process of transition. I am now post-op.

If I could add anything to Anne's article, it would be to emphasize that we are not "tragic," nor do we need "better psychological counseling." Transsexuality is not a sexual orientation or a psychological disorder. It is a question of mental gender, and current research is leading doctors to believe it is genetically caused in much the same way as hermaphroditism.

Furthermore, those of us who deal with reputable care providers follow the Harry Benjamin Standards of Care. These require rigorous psychological screening, at least one year of living as your true gender, hormone therapy which is the bulk of the so-called "sex change," changing one's legal status, and finally surgery, if desired. Not all of us have surgery, especially female-to-male, because our surgery is not perfected, as is the male-to-female technique.

In closing, I thank *Trikone* for its open-mindedness in dealing with the issue of transsexuality. Too many lesbian and gay groups do not do so. It is a shame that people who themselves have difficulty being accepted by society should harbor any prejudice toward other similar groups.

Ali, Tempe, Arizona

## South Asian Enough?

After reading the July 1995 issue, I must say that the credulous credit-worthiness of cacophony within the South Asian gay movement needs to be addressed straight-away.

Let me reply to Tinku Ishtiaq's letter. The fact that the Bombay Gay Conference was called a "South Asian" one was not for want of trying. We sent in more than 10 applications to Pakistan, 5 to Bangladesh, a couple to Nepal, 2 to Bhutan, and even as far as Afghanistan. Tinku can verify this through his contacts in these countries.

The good "intentions" of holding a "South Asian" meet did not turn into reality. We do regret this but the fact remains that we tried very hard, and we prepared for nearly six months, selecting people from our database. Every gay group in India will attest to our efforts.

We quite understand the socio-religious problems faced by our gay brothers in these two Islamic countries and the deep cultural diversities involved. But I would gently point out to Tinku that to date there is not even a single letter of intimation from these countries for "inclusive participation and relevant agenda." Surely one cannot clap

with one hand?

It was Tinku himself who had told me during our personal meeting a few years ago how difficult it was to establish even a foothold in Bangladesh for gay groups and networks. Could he not show us the same charitable consideration he allows himself?

Ashok Row Kavi, Chair,  
Humsafar Trust, Bombay

## Trikone with the Lamp

It was a pleasure to read *Trikone* this past year. I am grateful for the free copies which we and other South Asian readers receive. Articles in the issues I have read have been informative and interesting. Warm wishes for *Trikone's* 10th birthday. Hope you always keep up the good work. I'm sure you will. *Trikone* is a Florence Nightingale of sorts for us gays.

Sanjay, Calcutta

Transsexuals  
are not  
"tragic," nor  
do they need  
"better psy-  
chological  
counseling."

# More Than Virtual Vaid

*Urvashi Vaid takes time out  
to chat with her desi sisters*

By PRIYAMVADA SINHA  
and VINITA SRIVASTAVA

**S**outh Asian lesbian, activist, lawyer, and former head of the *National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF)*, Urvashi Vaid recently completed her first book, *Virtual Equality: The Mainstreaming of Gay & Lesbian Liberation, to be released in the fall by Anchor Books. It is being heralded as words of wisdom from one of the greatest activist minds in America—who happens to be South Asian. In December 1994, Time magazine named Vaid to its "Fifty for the Future" list of America's most promising leaders under age 40.*

*Raised and educated in the United States, Vaid now lives with her partner in Provincetown, Massachusetts. Her parents, both Hindi writers, currently live in New Delhi.*

*During Pride Utsav '95, the international South Asian lesbian and gay conference in San Francisco, in which Vaid was the keynote speaker, writers and activists Priyamvada Sinha and Vinita Srivastava pulled her aside to discuss her new book, and to rap about community organizing, race, and family ...*

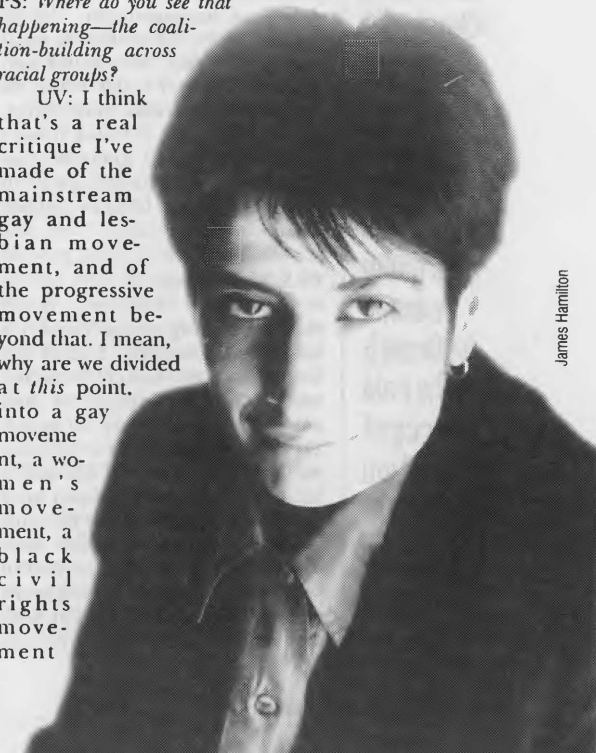
PRIYAMVADA SINHA: *Tell us about your talk here at Pride Utsav.*

URVASHI VAID: The first half of my speech was: What does a South Asian lesbian and gay movement do? Why does it exist? It's there for support, for advo-

cacy among our communities of origin, to deal with racism that we even deny in our own community. The second part was: having done those things, the next step for South Asian organizing—as well as for Black and Latino and for Native American organizing—is to make the coming together happen.

PS: *Where do you see that happening—the coalition-building across racial groups?*

UV: I think that's a real critique I've made of the mainstream gay and lesbian movement, and of the progressive movement beyond that. I mean, why are we divided at this point, into a gay movement, a women's movement, a black civil rights movement



James Hamilton



Arvind Kumar

"I don't think that those organizations [like NGLTF] are where our liberation are going to come [from]. The real source of liberation is cultural."

an environmental movement, a such-and-such movement?

There is a need for each of those organizations to exist because you've got to provide focus and leadership on a particular issue—granted. But the Right manages to come together as Baptists, this denomination, that denomination ... They come together as anti-abortionists, as anti-tax people. They're all the "anti-s." Why don't the "pro-s" [come together]?

VINITA SRIVASTAVA: *What was the initial idea behind your book?*

UV: I was looking at my own work in the movement over a 15-year period, from the more street activist side of the movement, into this mainstream gay and lesbian civil rights organization [NGLTF] and running it. Actually, I don't think that those organizations are where our liberation are going to come [from]. The real source of liberation is cultural.

The Right wing says that what these people [gays and lesbians] are really after is the cultural validation of homosexuality. We always say, "No, all we want is equal rights." In fact, we should say, "Yes, we are. That is what we want!" Which is also equal rights. I would be lying if I said I don't want my parents to completely accept me. It might not happen in this lifetime, but they're getting there.

PS & VS: *Are they?*

UV: They really are. In 15 years of coming out to them, it's been really dramatic. I think my father moved faster than my mother. I think she feels that she's a bad mother and is ashamed. She's internalized it in a different way than my dad has. He and I had a few talks about it, and once he realized it's not about him, it's not against men, or against him, he was like, as long as you're happy and safe, and doing work that you find fulfilling, I'm with you.

PS: *You're pretty much the most prominent South Asian woman in America. I'm sure every South Asian must know of you, and know that you're out as a lesbian. How does the South Asian community respond to you?*

UV: The feedback I get is always polite. There's a cultural politeness, which masks a lot more. I guess I haven't dealt with that entrenched sexist element in South Asian community ... [like] the conservatives ... that really do exist, that support the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] and give them \$10 million a year.

I find that my generation—I'm 36—and younger are really quite open. My sister's husbands are completely supportive, [as are] the extended family and their friends. The young teachers, engineers, the immigrant professional class, the middle class that I interact with, are really friendly and curious.

My 12-year-old niece [told me], "I saw your speech on the March on Washington," because she watched it on TV, with my sister Rachana and her husband Ramesh. I guess they were flipping [stations] when they saw it, and I said, "What did you think?" and she said, "It was really good!" And then we went on to talk about, you know, the Baby-sitters series or something ... To her, it's woven into her experience of me. She thinks it's funny, she thinks it's interesting ...

The fact is that I get a lot of support from my sisters, too, because they are normalizing it with their kids and their husbands by just being normal with me and by including my lover Kate in conversations. We go to visit, and the kids are okay, "This is Urvashmasi and her friend Kate," and it's nice.

Our parents are such a central issue for each of our existences, in a way that it isn't for [white] Americans at all. My lover is com-

ing to understand it, but it took me some educating because she's American, to explain why my parents' opinions and attitudes matter so much. It's going to be interesting as South Asian queers expand in numbers, as more of us come out in the context of our families, to see how those families change.

PS: *What has been your experience of being out as a lesbian in South Asian media?*

UV: It's a very big deal. I started giving interviews with Indian media in 1987. At first, I didn't use my last name, just Urvashi, but how many Urvashis work at the NGLTF? ... But I had to go through that fear about myself, of coming out in the Indian media, and some of it [the fear] was: what reaction is this going to bring on my family? I don't live there [in India], and they do.

The value of that [interviews with Indian media] is unbelievable. I got letters from all over. Now I am actively doing some interviews with *India West*, *India Abroad*, *India Today*, and *Star TV*. The people we reach we don't even know that we're reaching.

PS: *How do you think the South Asian community here in America handles issues of race?*

UV: This is part of the other point I made in my remarks last night, that I don't think the South Asian community here addresses race very effectively.

I think we have a very conflicted view about where we fit in racially, into the dynamics of this country, and we have very conflicted politics about race coming from our own communities and countries, because there's caste, color lines ...

I get invited to speak a lot in colleges and universities in America, and often the co-sponsoring groups include the South Asian students' associations. Straight, young people come and hear me

talk, and they do see themselves in a racial way that my generation didn't, and certainly my parents didn't. I think my parents' generation saw themselves as ... um ... white, you know?

PS: *What was your childhood like?*

UV: I was raised with values [like]: you have to get an education, you're going to get married, you're going to have children, no dating—all those strict rules about growing up as a teenager. It didn't matter that we were living in this country. In that sense, I think they [my parents] were quite traditional, they had the traditional aspirations for each of their daughters (I have two sisters).

So, coming out to them, I have to give them a lot of credit. It was painful for me while I was doing it, because I did what so many South Asians do, which is to withdraw. We had a lot of tension in my family because of cross-cultural conflict. They wanted me to be more Indian, and I am quite Westernized. But I am Indian; I'm both.

I pulled back from my family in part because I felt hurt over their reaction to my being gay.

But now I understand them as reacting quite naturally. They were working through their own process, and we have both met each other and become comfortable over issues. In the process of moving away from my family, I moved away from my culture, my South Asian self, because I was hesitant to go into South Asian community settings, or I felt uncomfortable. I am very sad about that, because that was a great loss for me.

I was [instead] entering those lesbian and gay communities that were predominantly white, and if there were people of color, they were African American. There were so few South Asian lesbian and gay people at the time that I came out, too. There wasn't the kind of space as there is now. ▼



Arvind Kumar

"We have a very conflicted view about where we fit racially into the dynamics of this country."

# From Coconut Pumps to RuPaul

*The adventures of an Indian drag queen*

By SAMIR DESAI

I grew up in a fairly large city called Baroda in Gujarat in India. When I was 14, we came to the United States and settled in Northern California. Ever since I can remember, I used to play school with the neighborhood kids, and I would always insist on being Vakhria teacher, the vice-principal of my school, Rosary High School. I truly admired and respected her for what she had achieved in our male-dominated society. Her resounding voice, echoing in the corridors of our school, sent shivers down our spines, especially if you were caught speaking grammatically incorrect English in front of her. It was her dynamic personality that drove me to impersonate women.

She was 5'2", with oval black framed glasses, through which her eyes appeared larger than an owl's. And she was always neatly dressed in a skirt and blouse, shoes with slight heels and stockings. I think she



was the only teacher who wore skirts and dresses while the rest of the female staff wore saris.

While playing school, I wrapped pieces of bed sheets around my waist, creating skirts, and used my mother's sari blouses as tops. I often made hair extensions from coconut leaves and tied it in a neat bun. No woman in my family owned pumps. So I made pumps out of coconut halves, by placing each half under a slipper and nailing it to the slipper. The things that a poor beginner drag queen has to go through with limited resources.

On certain religious occasions, Vakhria teacher used to come to school in a lovely sari, and I would just stare at her, mesmerized, not listening to what she was teaching. Then I would run home and lock myself in my mother's bedroom and start putting on one sari after another. Once when I was 14, my grandmother caught me in a sari. She told me that if she ever saw me in a sari again she would take me to a doctor in a mental hospital. She also kept on insisting that I take part in sports like cricket and hockey but what I really wanted to learn were dances like bharata natyam and kathakali. After that incident, I

realized that my love for cross-dressing was looked down upon by society.

I totally idolized women, especially those who achieved something in a male-dominated society. I felt that they had a better understanding of oppression because of their experiences in combating it and refusing to put up with it. I

idolized women like Vakhria teacher, Indira Gandhi, and the former governor of Gujarat, Shardaben Mukherji. And, of course, my mother, because she did not put up with my emotionally abusive father, and left him in the mid 70s with my brother and me, and then came to the U.S. in the mid 80s and made a life of her own.

I do drag out of respect for women, not to mock them. I strongly feel that it is the duty of one oppressed group to recognize the other and work with them. And I recognize the deep links between homophobia and sexism, both stemming from heterosexual male society. And it is that society which tells me to conform to its rules and regulations, by asking me to dress in a certain way that men are supposed to. And when a man breaks this barrier, he becomes the laughing stock of society.

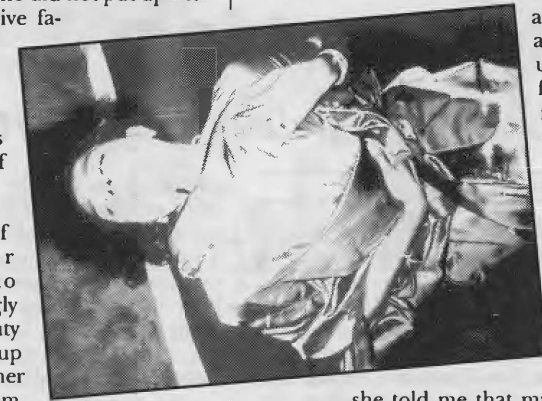
But it has always been the drag queens, from Stonewall to the corners of Bombay, who have stood up first, not only for their rights but for the rights of other minorities such as the poor and the homeless. I remember hearing about the drag queens of Amsterdam campaigning for the rights of immigrants from African countries.

Not surprisingly, effeminate men have a much harder time in our society than the so-called "macho" looking guys. If society is going to laugh at us effeminate men, we might as well give it a show by doing the best that we can—drag.

Since we already have the gestures and movements down, all we need to do is slap on some make-up and a sequenced dress or one with a bustier and voila, we have a gorgeous man ready to give a show. And break the rules of conformity.

I came out to my mother about two years ago, and at first things did not go too well. But after several months my mother came around and was totally supportive of me. In 1993 she saw me for the first time in drag. She was shocked. Our annual drag extravaganza in Davis, California, is called

"Davis Is Burning" sponsored by our fraternity Delta Lambda Phi. I had a bunch of other friends over that night since I was their makeup artist. She sat and observed us but refused to make eye contact with me.



Then an old friend of mine, also in drag, sat down and started talking to her. Later

she told me that made her realize that not only were we still the same underneath but that these men walking around in dresses were the gentlest people she had ever met.

The next year she was even more supportive. We even went shopping for my padded bra together and scared the saleswoman at the departmental store.

People often ask me if I want to be a woman. I then start explaining the difference between transsexuals, transvestites (usually heterosexual men with a fetish for women's clothes), and drag queens. I am quite content with what God gave me and would very much like to remain a man. It just so happens that I enjoy wearing women's clothes on certain occasions. And no, I don't do drag everyday. I would be so uncomfortable wearing nylons and pumps all the time. Thank God for Levis and Nikes.

Drag queen celebrity RuPaul was in San Francisco recently to promote his new book, *Lettin' It All Hang Out*, and I had the honor of meeting him. His book does an excellent job of answering a lot of the frequently asked questions about drag queens. My favorite RuPaul quote is, "Honey, you are born naked. The rest that you put on your body is Drag." So you might as well make it look fabulous! ▼



# More than a Celebration

*Pride Utsav '95: a delegate's report*

By MUNIA BOSE

**U**tsav means "celebration," but for me, the **Pride Utsav** conference in San Francisco was more than that. I was "dragged out" of the closet by my mother as a result of it—she had read about it in *India Abroad*, knew I had attended a conference in San Francisco during that time, and put all the pieces together. On another level, the conference made me think more about my identity and identity politics. It raised issues I had not thought about before, and shed light on issues I had been thinking about for a while. And it allowed me to build connections with some amazing and special women and men.

Pride Utsav, which took place June 15-18, 1995 at the University of California's San Francisco Mission Center, was hosted by **Trikone** of the San Francisco Bay Area and co-chaired by **Dipti Ghosh** and **Devesh Khatu**. Its theme was "Affirming Our Culture, Celebrating Our Sexuality." One hundred and six people from the U.S. and abroad registered, 41 women and 65 men. This high female-to-male ratio is rare for a queer gathering, and the organizers made commendable efforts to have as many women as possible participate (by making phone calls, offering scholarships).

Delegations from every South Asian lesbian/gay/bisexual group in the U.S. and Canada attended and cosponsored the event, and many of the participants were put up by kind local *khushis*\*. Some well-known members of our community also participated, including activist **Urvashi Vaid**, **Shivananda Khan** of the **Naz Project**, **Ashok Row Kavi** and **Suhail Abbasi** of **Bombay Dost**, filmmaker **Gitanjali**, and writer/editor **Rakesh Ratti**.

The mornings began with the opening plenary in the **Kama Sutra Room**, followed by various workshops, held in rooms renamed **Anamika**, **Babar**, and **Lihaaf**. In the

workshop on coming out, we heard people's experiences of coming out to themselves and their families. Although I didn't know it then, this helped me deal with my own mother's reaction to "the news" soon after that. I realized that she reacted like many other South Asian parents, and others' experiences help me hold on to the hope that things will get better.

At the workshop on South Asian PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gay men), we discussed issues which our families may have, which differ from issues "mainstream" PFLAG organizations address, in the hope of creating a brochure for South Asian families.

Other workshops discussed diasporan issues, safer sex and health issues for women, eroticism for men, interracial relationships, sexism within the South Asian queer community, and so much more. I must admit that my favorite was **Gitanjali's** "Flirtation 101 for Women."

Besides the organized events, many *khushis* invaded the San Francisco scene—taking over bars and clubs, something which I doubt happens very often. **Trikone** board member **Tinku Ishtiaq** hosted a reception as well—it was a great time for people to get to know each other in a less formal environment. It also probably marked the beginning of some of the romantic intrigues that went on.

The most popular event, the Utsav banquet, took place on Friday night with over 300 people attending—including parents and friends and representatives of other Asian and queer organizations. A wonderful Indian dinner was followed by a very queer and very South Asian cultural program including a fashion show, poetry reading, and performance art. Activists **Pratibha Parmar** and **Arvind Kumar** were presented awards for their contributions to our community, after which **Urvashi Vaid** gave a thought-provoking keynote address. By this time,



folks were ready to boogie, and DJ **Vinita Srivastava** broke out the *bhangra*.

After the conference ended on Saturday, many of the women went on to the **Dyke March**. Our huge South Asian contingent was very likely the loudest group in the march, shouting slogans like, "We're queer, we're Asian, we're all across the nation," and some unpublishable ones. Our boys cheered us on from the sidelines. The highlight for me was seeing a little brown girl—maybe seven years old—wave down to us. It made me realize what we were doing—making ourselves visible and creating our own space does not only serve us. We were also trying to make life a bit easier for junior *khushis* as they come of age—serving as role models, letting them know that they are not the only ones.

Sunday was the **Pride Parade**. Unfortunately I was unable to march—I'd partied too late the night before. The word on the street was that we had the largest South Asian contingent to ever participate, and people danced to *bhangra* music behind the festively decorated truck. Later marchers hung out at the **Trikone** booth and checked out the **Pride festival**.

**T**he conference wasn't all sunshine and flowers. Some disturbing issues came up—sexism within our community, class issues, race issues ... Who qualifies as South Asian? Why do we want to affirm a culture that oppresses us? Why is family so important to us, and are we reinforcing the patriarchal status quo by holding on to that model? Much of the time, I noted how comfortable I felt in this space, unlike many queer spaces I have inhabited. I identified, I felt like people shared my issues and politics, and I felt like I wasn't be-

ing questioned—I felt accepted. Equally often, however, I noted the things which often alienate us from one another and make our community a forced one—gender, class, religion, language, place of birth, stage of coming out. And what about those who we didn't do a very good job of representing at the conference, such as those with different levels of education? Starting—but not resolving—discussions about these problems was a major component of the Utsav experience.

In the conference program booklet, **Dipti** and **Devesh** wrote, "We hope you will leave San Francisco richer and more fulfilled as a person from the experiences and laughter you have shared with others at **Pride Utsav '95**." I did. I arrived during registration on Thursday, not really knowing anyone, a little nervous, not knowing what to expect. By Sunday, I felt like I was part of a strong, proud, diverse, and supportive community. During those days, I met so many intelligent, well-spoken, active, and beautiful South Asian lesbians and gay men. What could be more inspiring and empowering? I heard over and over again, "I thought I was the only one." We found out together that we are not alone.

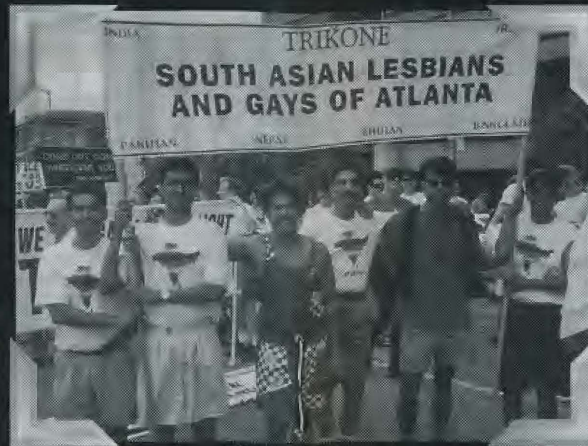
E-mail networks and magazines are one thing, but seeing and listening to and interacting with people makes a "virtual community" a real one. Can't wait 'til next year's conference in Vancouver! ▼

\* I use the term "*khushi*" (Bengali for happy) to replace the long-winded "South Asian lesbian, gay, and bisexual people." Though my use is obviously derived from the English use of the word "gay," it does have a recent history of use in the South Asian (diasporic) lesbian/gay community (e.g., the "*khush-net*" e-mail network).

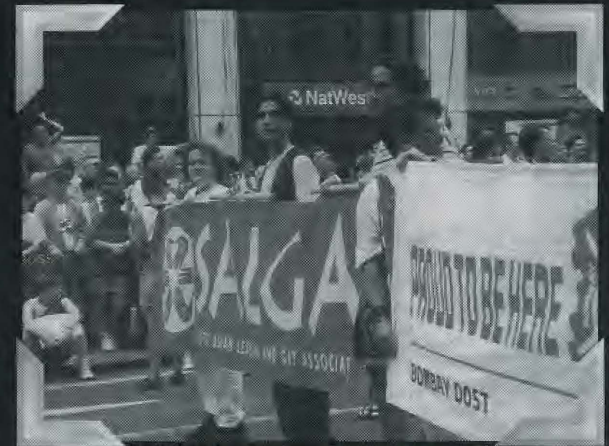




Pride Utsav '95 Gang, San Francisco



Trikone, Atlanta



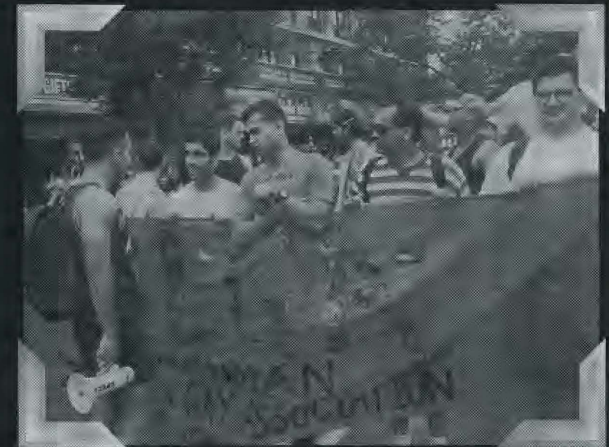
SALGA & Bombay Dost, New York



MASALA, Boston



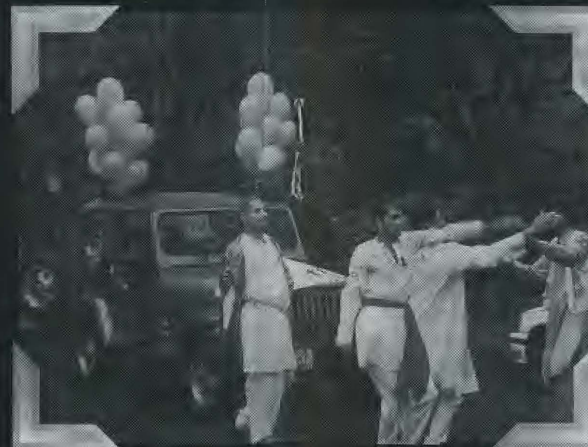
Also marched: Trihona, Los Angeles • Khush, Toronto



SALGA, Queens



Sangat, Chicago



Atish, Vancouver



SALGA, Philadelphia

# Labor Pains and All That

The pioneering story of Calcutta's *Pravartak*

By PAWAN DHALL

Calcutta—the city of “underground movements.” There’s one that is still struggling to complete its course (the Metro railway), while there’s another (the Metro railway), while there’s another which is now aspiring to shake off its subaltern existence. Not entirely right away, but the process has begun.

The magazine *Pravartak* turned five issues old—and the group **Counsel Club** two years old—this August. Time perhaps to share some of our experiences of the journey so far.

*Pravartak* was born out of the demise of Calcutta’s **Fun Club** (a venture with possibly much more potential than it ever displayed), out of a desire to keep Calcutta on the map of “gay” action. Circa December 1991.

Three issues of a typed, photocopied, stapled existence later, *Pravartak* went into hibernation (after the third issue came out in March 1992). Wonders never cease, for it was up and about again—this time on August 15, 1993. While the earlier version had a one-man “editorial team” and some “financiers,” the new version had a five-man crew and a parent organization as well—**Counsel Club**. Of course, all the “financiers” were still there, more in number and perhaps a little richer. And they’ve stayed to this day. There’s no PR like friendship! These “financiers” are none other than individuals and groups of people—of many hues—from all over India and abroad. *Pravartak* is grateful to them and salutes them as well as those who have provided valuable moral and emotional support.

Perhaps the magazine wasn’t the best way to start (the second time). Counsel Club

could have started with the first-Sunday monthly meetings which began in September 1994 and proved to be a major draw. The magazine could have started a bit later, rather than lead right from the start. Today *Pravartak* does take up a lot of time, money, and energy which we sometimes feel could be more fruitfully diverted. (Counsel Club’s wish list would overflow a wishing well and require a wishing ocean!) The magazine also needs to have more participation in its conception and preparation.

But wait a minute. It’s not all that bad. The magazine has generated a lot of response and enthusiasm. And *Pravartak* may well claim to be a formula that clicks. In this

“city of little magazines,” nothing fires peoples’ imaginations like a magazine does. Specially a magazine with something to “new” to offer which is also anti-establishment.

Of the 11 printers *Pravartak* has interacted with, four remarked that the subject was “*nuton*” (new) and “*khubi bhalo*” (very meaningful work). One also said it was extremely courageous of *Pravartak* to write about a taboo subject.

Sure, there have been raised eyebrows and a few smirks. But all these were more than compensated for when one day this writer found himself conducting an “impromptu talk” on alternate sexualities with the staff of one of the printers. In fact, for all those who have done the legwork to get the four issues out, it’s been more an exercise in battling their *own* inhibitions. To be seen to be backing alternate expressions of love and desire can invite some very queer looks.

An old joke at Counsel Club is that each issue of *Pravartak* is like conceiving and delivering a baby. Deciding on what will go in; the editing and the proofing; getting the

illustrations done; checking the bank balance; negotiating the costs; waking up till the wee hours to finish the cutting and the pasting—it’s kind of like passionate love-making. Under several roofs, on several beds and tables, and even in restaurants.

It all builds up to a crescendo, involving the printers as well, on the day the issue is to come out. Little wonder then that there is ecstasy in release.

Later, every error detected is like a stab in the heart.

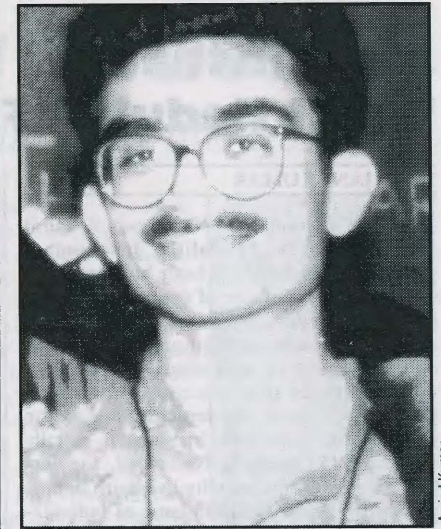
There have been perfidies typical of Calcutta. The printer appointed for the first issue never made the final proofing corrections, and charged in full as well. He wouldn’t buy the argument that the city was paralyzed by flooded streets, which was why there had been a delay in getting in touch. It took pursuing seven printers to bring out the first issue. No homophobia, but plenty of “work phobia.” Also the clammy monsoon air wouldn’t let the silk-screened cover dry quickly enough.

All along it’s been an overwhelming experience. But the days of goose pimples may well be over. *Pravartak* has started attracting “intelligent criticism” along with bouquets. Expectations are building up, and not only with “gay” readers. Its readership includes other NGOs and “non-gay” individuals such as the professor of a reputed city college, a publisher, and the member of a radical discursive group. Totally in keeping with Counsel Club’s membership ethos.

There’s also the Damocles’ sword hanging over us all the time—you never know when a “keeper of public conscience” might deem *Pravartak* “obscene and immoral.” But *Pravartak* will not flinch from its stand that though for private circulation, it’s for public reading.

The pages in Bengali and Hindi have proved useful—in providing a regional flavor and acquiring a “deeper” readership, in pulling “Bengali heartstrings” abroad, and in helping the magazine being talked about and even purchased in the cruising areas. There are plans to make the contents of these pages and their language more representative of the street-level reality.

At the moment, Counsel Club is mostly peopled by “gay-identified” men and women. But it has “non-gay” members as well and it’s in touch with “men who have sex



Arvind Kumar

Of the 11 printers *Pravartak* has interacted with, four remarked that the subject was “*nuton*” (new) and “*khubi bhalo*” (very meaningful work).

with men” too—that large section of men who may not be “gay-identified,” but perhaps believe in being gay in their own way.

It is this (bio)diversity of the human jungle which Counsel Club believes in. It feels that the realm of expression of “love and desire for someone of the same sex” is not homogeneous. It may include romance, brothers-in-arms feelings, an unnamed bond, just plain *masti* between close friends, and innumerable other expressions. Also that this realm can be different from that of “pure sexual release with someone of the same sex.”

Thus, Counsel Club is wary of employing terms such as “gay” which may be sweeping and not in touch with Indian reality. So is Counsel Club a “gay group”? Is *Pravartak* a “gay periodical”?

How about substituting “gay” with “natural rights”? Why not “diversity”? ▼

The latest issue of *Pravartak* is available for \$5 from *Trikone*, P.O. Box 21354, San Jose, CA 95151, USA. Proceeds benefit *Pravartak*.

# Jayalalitha and Sasikala: Tamil Nadu's "First Roomies"

By RAJANI KUMAR

**T**he current Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Dr. Jayalalitha Jayaram(an) [the Doctorate is both honorary and inevitably used], is one of the most powerful women in Indian politics. Despite numerous allegations of corruption, Jayalalitha is still the object of adoration from flunkies and the masses alike—recently a controversial billboard went up depicting her as the Virgin Mary. One imagines she is equally popular with Sasikala Natarajan, the former video store owner who lives with her.

As the April 15, 1995 issue of *India Today* records it, the women first met when Jayalalitha visited Cuddalore with her political mentor, the former Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, M.G. Ramachandran, who was also widely considered her lover. The two were later reunited when Sasikala's bureaucrat husband was transferred to Madras and Jayalalitha went into the video store Sasikala had started.

They became such good friends that Sasikala and her husband Natarajan moved in with Jayalalitha. Then Sasikala's husband moved out, apparently because he had retained a letter of resignation that Jayalalitha at one point wrote to be sent to the Governor. But Sasikala stayed on, estranged from her husband.

Over the past few years, Sasikala's political clout has been growing phenomenally—many of the corruption allegations against Jayalalitha involve her largesse to members of Sasikala's family. Much has been published in the Tamil print media about the expensive, even extravagant, gifts which Jayalalitha showers on Sasikala. Recently the Income Tax Department of the Government of India has sent notices to Sasikala and five others seeking details of their source of funds for the purchase of the Amrutanjan property in Luz Corner in Madras. It has been alleged that the building worth Rs 3 crore has been purchased by them at a cost of Rs 54 lakh.

More recently, Jayalalitha has attracted international attention for the opulent wed-

ding of the century between her foster son and the granddaughter of popular thespian Sivaji Ganesan. This foster son is actually Sasikala's nephew and Jayalalitha pronounced him her foster son on the day the wedding was announced.

Jayalalitha's main political rival, M. Karunanidhi, was reported in a previous issue of *India Today* as saying that Jayalalitha and Sasikala exchanged garlands in Tirupati [a ritual usually observed by newlyweds]. Neither woman has publicly described their relationship in any way. The *New York Times* (September 10) describes Sasikala as her "closest confidante." But most people use the word "tOzhi" ("friend" in Tamil) to describe Sasikala's relationship with Jayalalitha. It is not clear whether this is intended to be ambiguous or euphemistic. If it is either, what is behind the coyness?

Or is it that Jayalalitha and Sasikala are just roommates? ▼

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Jayalalitha Jayaram (left) with roommate Sasikala Natarajan (right)



India Today

# Soul City Blues

*A new milestone in Indian gay literature?*

By ASHOK JETIANANDANI

**ONE DAY I LOCKED MY FLAT IN SOUL CITY.** Short stories by R. Raj Rao. Rupa & Co. Paperback. 112 pages. Rs. 50.

**T**his compilation of short stories is a milestone in Indian gay literature. Many of R. Raj Rao's stories are candid accounts of men who love men, but the content of this volume is not limited to homosexuality, and it is this integration of themes, and their publication by a major Indian publishing-house like Rupa & Co., that makes *One Day I Locked My Flat in Soul City* significant.

Rao has written fiction for several journals and magazines. The lyrical quality of his prose gives us an inkling of his leanings towards poetry. His first book of poems, *Slide Show*, was published in 1992; this is his first book of short stories. He writes about a wide range of human experience in a direct and unpretentious style.

*Moonlight Tandoori* is a moving story of an Indian student in England who finds himself falling in love with a heterosexual Bangladeshi boy. Rao communicates the closeted experience with telling silences and intimate moments mixed with sly smiles and unpredictable hate.

*Confessions of a Boy Lover* is a story about a man's frustrated love for a college friend. When his friend's family discovers their relationship, they use every possible trick to break it up. Rao tells the story through a series of letters between the two men. His de-

scription of the rejection, ridicule, threats of violence, and the overwhelming hate against this non-conforming love is sensitive and vivid.

The story *Psychoanalysis* shows the Westernization of attitudes about intimacy, where even casual physical contact between men is viewed with suspicion.

My favorite piece is *Autobiography of an Unknown Indian*, a perceptive and witty tale written from the perspective of a runaway man, who spends almost his entire life traveling on trains. You can sense all the sights, sounds, and smells of his escapade, and more, because this man is also high on smack.

Rao is outspoken about the depredations gay men experience—rejection, hate, ridicule, abuse, indifference, violence. What is missing is some ray of hope, a hint of optimism, a trace of a happy ending or beginning. However, the very candor in the narration of same sex feelings gives the characters of these stories a large measure of self-esteem. ▼



The candor in the narration of same sex feelings gives the characters a large measure of self-esteem.

## Dew Drop Inn

We also received word of a new title from Writers Workshop, Calcutta, by writer Leslie de Noronha, who tells us: "*Dew Drop Inn* is a novel set in India. The novel is comprised of seven novelettes. The fourth and fifth are about two Indian Catholic and Jewish gay men and a closet queen (Anglo-Indian) and 'homosexual panic.' The three gays also appear as minor characters in the rest of the novel which is otherwise straight. In the sixth novelette, the major character is a bisexual Goan doctor who sees the gay life with clinical and objective clarity."

## Ground Zero

The *Washington Post* (August 17) has characterized India as Ground Zero in the spread of AIDS to Asia. "Many experts now believe that India will soon have the unfortunate distinction of being the AIDS capital of the world," says Columbia University economist and AIDS specialist David Bloom. The World Health Organization and the Indian government estimate that there are about 80,000 cases of AIDS in the country and 1.5 million people who are infected with HIV. Experts, however, predict that by the year 2000, 1 million will have AIDS and 5 million will be HIV-positive. By the year 2010, the number of those infected by HIV can reach 30 million which is double the world total today.

In his article, John Ward Andersen also quoted surveys of truck-drivers in the Calcutta area that indicated that more than 90 percent of them visited at least one prostitute a week and 68 percent did not use a condom. More than 5 percent of the truckers are said to be HIV-positive.

Andersen also said that a survey of 57 doctors in Bangalore, often described as India's hi-tech capital, showed a singular lack of information about HIV. A quarter believed that HIV could be spread by casual contact and 35 percent said HIV patients should be denied first aid; 81 percent believed a syringe was reusable after changing the needle.

## Passages

On June 4, Kalpesh Oza, dedicated social justice activist known for his dedication to the South Asian lesbian and gay movement and the South Asian AIDS movement—as well as his trademark colorful scarves—passed away at the age of 31 after living with AIDS since 1987-88. Oza lived in Montreal and Toronto. A memorial service was held on July 22 in Toronto.

On August 25, Sulaiman Mohamed (left), a founding member of the Atish HIV/AIDS Network in Vancouver, passed away



at the age of 39 after a courageous struggle with AIDS. He came to Canada in 1988 from Cape Town, South Africa. A memorial will be held October 3. Contact Al-Qamar Sangha at (604) 528-9275 for details.

## In the Blood

A Bombay blood bank operated by the Indian Red Cross Society (IRCS) has been closed amidst allegations that it provided HIV-infected blood to hospitals between 1992 and 1994. *Nature* (July 27) reported that the matter came to light when a Red Cross official examined the bank's records. The HIV-infected blood had been supplied to at least 10 city hospitals. There were also charges that some employees at the bank had been selling the tainted blood on the black-market. The case was especially shocking because it is the IRCS which sets the national blood safety standards.

## By Any Other Name

According to a precedent-setting judgment in the Bombay High Court by Justice G.D. Kamat and Justice N.D. Vyas, both the petitioner and the respondent in a writ petition filed by a HIV-positive individual challenging the discontinuance of his employment could use pseudonyms. The *Indian Express* (July 14) said the petitioner, referred to as Mr. MX, had challenged the decision of the public sector corporation, referred to as M/s ZY, to terminate his services on the grounds that he had tested HIV-positive.

## Bombay Brothels

Reuters reported (July 17) that Human Rights Watch Asia had contended that up to 50,000 Nepali girls are enslaved in Bombay's brothels. The report, "Rape for Profit," said the most common incentives were promises of marriage and jobs. It said that since most of them eventually contract AIDS, the demand for "fresh meat" is always high. The report estimated that 20 percent of Bombay's 100,000 prostitutes were under 18 and half of them were HIV-positive. ▼

## Pure Desi Love

A small vegetable shop run by a young couple in the Indian steel city of Jamshedpur would not make much news. Except this couple is a male duo.



The love affair of Raju and Jitendra Pradhan is featured in *Boy Crazy* by Shrikant Rao in *Sunday Mid-Day* (July 2). Exploding the myth that homosexuality is a malady of the Western-influenced MTV generation, this story talks about the two men growing up in a middle-class neighborhood and the tribulations they went through when their relationship came to light.

When Pradhan's parents drove him out, Raju left home to join him. As Pradhan told the Christian priest who tried to "reform" him, "Yeh to bhagwan ka banaya rishta tha. (This was a relationship made by God)." Amen to that.

## Ladies' Ladies

Can you be Indian and cool in a New York dyke bar in your mirrored Rajasthani vest? These questions surfaced in *Village Voice* (June 27) in Vinita Srivastava's personal essay *Brown and Out* in *New York*. Surina Khan discusses South Asian lesbians in *No Such Person* (*Boston Phoenix*) and in *A Culture Of Their Own* (*Windy City Times*, May 4) where we learn Trikone co-chair "Dipti Ghosh had her first lesbian experience when she was 13." You go, girlfriend.

Another prominent lesbian was featured in the Sunday magazine section of the Indian newspaper, *The Telegraph* (June 18). *Ladies' Lady* by Amit Roy profiled filmmaker Pratibha Parmar. One reader, Arthur Manly of Patna, wrote in to say, "Just as we find such people unnatural, they too could be finding us unnatural."

## Our Heritage

*The Gay and Lesbian Literary Heritage* (Henry Holt) has an essay on South Asian literature by Emmanuel Nelson which

starts with the *Kama Sutra* and skims down the centuries to Rakesh Ratti's *A Lotus of Another Color*, exploring homosexual themes implicit (and explicit) in the works of Aga Shahid Ali, Vikram Seth, Suniti Namjoshi, and Shobha De, among others, on the way.

In other book news, Abraham Verghese's *My Own Country* won the Lambda Award for Gay Men's Biography/Autobiography (doesn't that make Verghese gay?). The upcoming *Queer View Mirror* (Arsenal Pulp Press) edited by James Johnstone and Karen Tulchinsky will feature a piece by Sandip Roy. Also look out for Ian Iqbal Rashid's new book, *The Heat Yesterday*, a collection of poetry and short prose from Coach House Press.

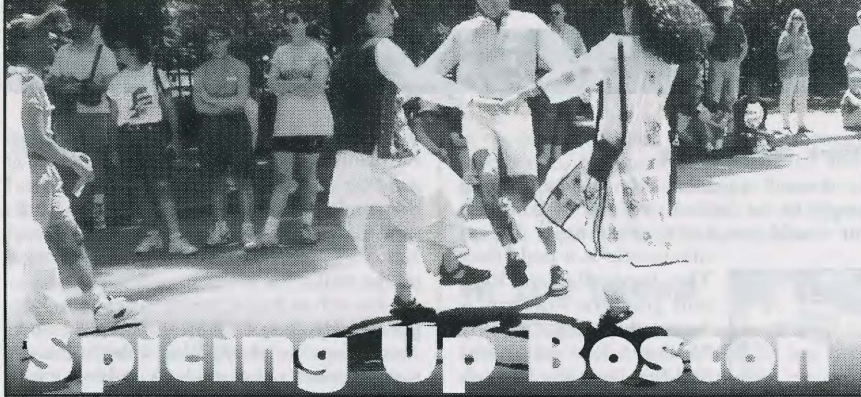
## Delicate Darling

"I enjoyed playing the gay in *Mast Kalandar*. It was a challenging role since homosexuality is still a taboo in India," says actor Anupam Kher in *Filmfare* (May '95). "But the crowds, in particular the overseas audience, loved me. This guy I played is a delicate darling ... the way he talks, the way he walks. ... There's also an unusual romantic angle with Shakti Kapoor lusting after me. The gays were thrilled because this was the first time a major actor was playing one of them with sympathy. Director Rahul Rawail told me that I'd been invited to a gay festival abroad. I didn't go." Wonder what festival that was. Any why didn't you go, Mr. Kher?



## Postscript

Reuters reports that an overflowing crowd showed up for the lesbian flirtation workshop (supposedly limited to 50 people) at the World Non-Governmental Organizations Forum in Huairou held as part of the Beijing Women's Conference. When no one showed up to conduct the workshop, the women simply swapped stories about "the lesbian eye thing" and "gaydar." And where was the facilitator—our own Gitanjali? Still in Toronto—she never got her visa to go to China. ▼



# Spicing Up Boston

By IMTIYAZ HUSSEIN & RANA MUKHERJI

The genesis of MASALA goes back to the winter of 1993/94. Seven men, having made contact with each other through *Trikone Magazine*, began meeting on a monthly basis at the home of Imtiyaz Hussein. We were Muslim and Hindu, Pakistani and Indian, born and raised in the West and in the Subcontinent, students and professionals, dark-skinned and light.

Some of the men already knew each other, but we were excited that some type of organization was beginning to take shape. We talked about what kind of group we wanted to be—social and/or political, gay and lesbian, etc.—the usual start-up concerns. We didn't really come to any consensus on these issues. We were just glad to have finally found each other.

At the end of summer '94, the group wanted to get the word out and placed an ad in a New England queer paper announcing the formation of a group for South Asian gays and lesbians. The response was overwhelming, and a much larger, more diverse group of South Asians converged on The Bombay Club restaurant in September. This was the first meeting of what was joyfully titled the **Massachusetts Area South Asian Lambda Association**—MASALA for those in the know.

MASALA is a social/support group for gay, lesbian, and bisexual South Asians in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut. The group continues to grow with new members every month. Currently there are 40 members on our mailing list, and our newsletter *MASALA Musings* comes out every month.

MASALA has recently been organizing

joint social events with QAPA, Boston's **Queer Asian Pacific Alliance**. We've also staged a multi-media presentation called "Lesbians in Asian Art." On a sunny June 10, MASALA and QAPA marched together in Boston's 25th Gay Pride Parade and rocked the city with a vibrant and very visible queer Asian presence.

Since the pomp and pageantry of **Boston Pride**, MASALA members have had the luxury of flaunting themselves at Pride celebrations in other cities, such as **Toronto, New York City, and San Francisco**. MASALA was also co-sponsor of **Pride Utsav '95**, where **Anushka Fernandopulle** led a seminar called "Speaking Out" and **Urvashi Vaid** gave the keynote address. To top it off our home-made banner even graced the pages of *India Abroad*, alongside those of *Trikone* and *Bombay Dost*. We also showed up in the *Boston Phoenix* in an article written by member **Surina Khan**.

More recently MASALA has held meetings and social events in cities outside of Boston, including a trip to gay Mecca **Provincetown, Lincoln Woods State Park** in Rhode Island, and a party in historic **Plymouth, MA**. We have networked with other people-of-color groups and have provided our membership with contact with other South Asian queer groups. Together we have ventured to New York City to attend parties hosted by big sister SALGA. But watch 'out world—MASALA's first anniversary party this fall will be all the rage! ▼

*MASALA meets the third Sunday of every month 4-6 p.m. at Positive Directions (8th floor of the YWCA), 140 Clarendon St, Boston (Back Bay neighborhood). MASALA, P.O. Box 1182, Cambridge, MA 02142. (617) 436-6369 ext 2.*

## Calendar

List your gay/lesbian South Asian events in the Calendar for no charge. Send details by mail/phone/fax/e-mail to *Trikone*. Deadline for the next issue: December 1, 1995.

### MIDWEST

**SEP 16, OCT 21, NOV 18**  
Third Saturday. **Sanga/Chicago's Monthly Meeting**. Call for venue & time. Vinu/tti (312) 506-8810.

### NORTHEAST

**SEP 20, OCT 18, NOV 15**  
Third Wednesday. **Khush Monthly Meeting**. 519 Church Street Community Center, Toronto. Khush Hotline (416) 925-XTRA ext 2173.

**SEP 25** Monday, 8 pm. **SALGA Administrative Meeting**. Lesbian and Gay Community Services Center, 208 W 13th St (between 7th and 8th Ave), New York. Last chance to offer input on SALGA's incorporation. SALGA Voice Mail (212) 294-2555.

**SEP 30** Saturday, 9 pm-1 am. **SALGA Sinners Ball** featuring the Shalimar Garden of Indecent Delights, bhanga and house music by DJ Geeta. Lesbian and Gay Community Services Center, 208 W 13th St (between 7th and 8th Ave), New York. \$8-\$12 sliding scale. Improper attire suggested. SALGA Voice Mail (212) 294-2555.

**OCT 4** Wednesday. Reading by **Hani Kureishi**. The author of *My Beautiful Laundrette* and *Buddha of Suburbia* speaks at Brattle Theater, Boston, to promote his new book *The Black Album*. Tickets free from Wordsworth's. For more info call Raj (617) 876-4073 or Steph (617) 623-8241.

**OCT 7, NOV 4, DEC 2** First Saturday, 4 pm. **SALGA-Philadelphia Monthly Meeting**. Action AIDS, 1216 Arch Street, Philadelphia. Kevin (215) 735-5114.

**OCT 7, NOV 4, DEC 2** First Saturday, 6 pm. **Khush-DC Monthly Meeting**. Meeting for GLB South Asians only. Social from 7 pm open to all. Luna Books, 1633 P street, NW, Washington DC. Nearest metro: Dupont Circle. (202) 728-3870.

**OCT 14, NOV 11, DEC 9** Second Saturday, 3:30-5:30 pm. **SALGA Monthly Meeting & Social**. Lesbian

and Gay Community Services Center, 208 W 13th St (between 7th and 8th Ave), New York. SALGA Voice Mail (212) 294-2555.

**OCT 16** Monday, 8 pm. **Curse of the Goddess**. SALGA-Philadelphia member Mohan Sikka performs at Performance Mix 1995-96. DIA Center for the Arts, 155 Mercer St, New York. \$8. For reservations call (212) 226-7624.

**OCT 21, NOV 18, DEC 17** Third Saturday, 4 pm. **MASALA Monthly Meeting**. Meeting for GLB South Asians only. Followed by open social. Positive Directions, 140 Clarendon Street, Suite 805 (8th floor of YWCA), Boston. Rana (617) 426-9234, Imtiyaz (617) 262-5744.

**NOV 18** Saturday, 6pm. **MASALA 1st Anniversary Bhangra Party**. Club Cafe, 209 Columbus Ave, "South End," Boston. Rana (617) 426-9234, Imtiyaz (617) 262-5744.

### NORTHWEST

**SEP 26, OCT 31, NOV 28** Last Tuesday. **Atish HIV/AIDS Project Meeting** for volunteers and members. Vancouver Cultural Alliance, 938 Howe St, Vancouver. (604) 528-9275.

**SEP 27, OCT 25, NOV 29** Last Wednesday. **Atish Gay/Bisexual Men's Support Group**. Gay Community Center, 1170 Bute St, Vancouver. (604) 528-9275.

**OCT 3** Tuesday. Memorial for Atish founding-member **Sulaiman Mohamed**. Call Al-Qamar at (604) 528-9275 for details.

### SOUTH

**OCT 7-8** Saturday-Sunday. **Overnight Camping Trip** in the North Georgia Mountains. Call Janak at (404) 261-7506 for details.

**OCT 14, NOV 11, DEC 9** Second Saturday. **Trikone-Atlanta Meeting**. Mehboob (404) 607-1766, Svati (404) 373-8915.

**OCT 15** Sunday. **AIDS Walk**. Join *Trikone* at the Atlanta AIDS Walk. For more info, call Mehboob (404) 607-1766, Svati (404) 373-8915.

### WEST

**SEP-OCT** *Trikone* at the Movies. Some *Trikone* members plan to see all nine restored masterworks of **Satyajit Ray** being shown September-October. Call Shahid at (415) 931-6905 to coordinate dates and times. Embarcadero Theater: (415) 352-0810.

**SEP 23** Saturday, 11:00 am-5 pm. **Rice Bowl 1995: 1st Annual Queer API Sports Day**. Frolic with events like mud ball, drag races, and twister. Bring your own food. Charcoal and grill provided. Free. Douglass Park, 26th St at Douglass (in Noe Valley), San Francisco. Prescott (415) 575-3939 x322.

**SEP 23** Saturday, 8 pm. **Junglee Girls and Funny Boys: A Book Discussion Party**. Come discuss two fun books—*Junglee Girl* by Gino Kamani and *Funny Boy* by Shyam Selvadurai. George will cook Indian vegetarian and Arul will supply dessert. At Arul's, 47 Noe St #1, San Francisco. RSVP Arul (415) 861-6930.

**OCT 10, 24, NOV 14, 28** Second & Fourth Tuesday, 7pm. **South Bay Q&A Meeting**. Billy DeFrank Community Center, 175 Stockton Ave, San Jose. Asians only. *Trikone* (408) 270-8776, SBQA (408) 236-3303.

**SEP 28, OCT 26, NOV 30** Thursdays. **Trikone Calendar Mailing**. Help mail the new issue at Devesh's in San Francisco. Confirm date and venue (415) 775-5825.

**SEP 30** Saturday, 1 pm. **Shakespeare in the Park: "As You Like It."** This adaptation is set in India, borrowing heavily from classical kathakali idiom. Bring a picnic lunch. In Golden Gate Park behind Conservatory of Flowers, off J.F. Kennedy Drive, San Francisco. Free. Francisco (415) 957-1057.

**OCT 5, NOV 2, DEC 7** First Thursday, 7:30 pm. **Trikone Mail Processing Meeting**. San Jose venue. Vegetarian dinner. RSVP (408) 270-8776.

**OCT 8, NOV 12, DEC 10** Second Sunday, 6-8 pm. **GAPA (Gay Asian Pacific Alliance) General Meeting**. Gay/bi API men only. MCC, 150 Eureka St, San Francisco. GAPA (415) 282-GAPA, Devesh (415) 775-5825.

**DEC 18** Monday, 7:30 pm. **Trikone Magazine Mailing**. San Jose venue. Vegetarian dinner. RSVP (408) 270-8776.

# Dear Babumoshai ...

I am a 32-year-old gay man under intense pressure to get married. A "regular" marriage is impossible. So I'm thinking of a "marriage of convenience." Will it work? What is the success rate of such marriages? Don't tell me to simply come out to my family. I don't have the guts.—Desperate in Sri Lanka

**Dear Desperate:** Aye Khoda, our "loving" families are still trying to push us on the shoulders of unsuspecting spouses. I presume your proposed "marriage of convenience" would be with the full consent of the woman involved. Keeping her unaware of your homosexuality would be extremely immoral and probably make your marriage a disaster zone.

How convenient are these "marriages of convenience"? You may satisfy your family for now, but you will be imposing on yourself and your wife the pressure to keep up appearances, and produce children (presumably hiding your sexuality from them). What rules will govern your marriage? Would your wife be able to play around as you would? Or are you going to promise monogamy while craving for men? Many married gay men appear to lead "normal" lives, but are tortured by their desires for other males and

feel guilty when they succumb to them.

There are other alternatives. Increasing numbers of gay men and lesbians in South Asia are not marrying and living independent lives. Some are out to their families, some are not. You may want to ask yourself why it's so difficult to be honest with your family. Your family seems very important to you—are you as important to them? If so, would they withdraw their love if you were to tell them the truth? South Asian parents may threaten and do various emotional manipulations, but they rarely reject their offspring. And I have yet to hear of any deaths due to heart attacks because their child told them he/she was gay.

In the long run, a closeted married life may be more painful than standing up to your family now and being honest. Do you have the "guts" to bear *that* pain and impose it on others? You have to decide. ▼

*Do you have questions, concerns, worries? Are you confused and alone? Babumoshai is always willing to listen and offer advice. Pour your heart out to: Babumoshai, c/o Trikone, P.O. Box 21354, San Jose, CA 95151, USA.*

Post Box 5308, New Delhi 110 053, India. Community work in issues of education, health, law, women, gay men and lesbians, professional blood donors, and drug abusers.

**NEW DELHI:** Sakhi, P.O. Box 3526, Lalpat Nagar, New Delhi 110 024, India. (11) 462-8970. For lesbians.

**SECUNDERABAD:** Gay Information Center, c/o Owais, P.O. Box 1662, Secunderabad HPO, AP, 500 003, India.

## MALAYSIA

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Pink Triangle, P.O. Box 11859, 50760 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. (03) 981-2863, fax (03) 981-2864. Counseling, AIDS information.

## NEW ZEALAND

**AUCKLAND:** Mastana, c/o CDO, Auckland University Students' Association, P.O. Box 92019, Taamaki Makau Rau (Auckland), 1000, Aotearoa (New Zealand). e-mail: u.uma@auckland.ac.nz. A mixed South Asian queer group.

## PAKISTAN

**FAISALABAD:** Hum-Khayal Publications, Attn: Anjum, 2 Jinnah Colony, Faisalabad, Pakistan. Publishers of Pakistan's first gay/lesbian book.

## UK

**LONDON:** Naz Project, Palingswick House, 241 King St, London, W6 9LP, U.K. (081) 563-0191. South Asian health organization.

**LONDON:** Shakti: South Asian Lesbian and Gay Network, BM Box 4390, London WC1N 3XX, UK. (01) 993-9001 weekends.

## USA

**ATLANTA:** Trikone-Atlanta, P.O. Box 18638, At-

lanta, GA 31126-0638, USA. Mehboob (404) 892-0475, Svati (404) 373-8915. For gay men and lesbians.

**BOSTON: MASALA:** Massachusetts Area South Asian Lambda Association, P.O. Box 1182, Cambridge, MA 02142. (617) 436-6369 ext 2. e-mail: bmkurjer@opal.tufts.edu. For gay, lesbian, and bisexual South Asians.

**CHICAGO:** Sangat, Box 268463, Chicago, IL 60626, USA. Viru, Ifiti (312) 506-8810, fax (312) 784-0148. For gay men and lesbians.

**LOS ANGELES:** Trikone-Los Angeles, c/o The Center, Admin Box 400, 1625 Schrader Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90028, USA. (213) 993-7626. For gay men and lesbians.

**NEW YORK:** South Asian Lesbian & Gay Assn (SALGA), P.O. Box 50, Cooper Station, New York, NY 10276-0050, USA. (212) 294-2555.

**PHILADELPHIA:** SALGA-Philadelphia, c/o Action AIDS, 1216 Arch St, 4th Fl, Philadelphia, PA 19107. Kevin (215) 735-5114. For gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender South Asians.

**SAN FRANCISCO:** Sadhana Brothers, c/o Ed Brophy, 4211 B 23rd St, San Francisco, CA 94114. (415) 647-4388. For gay men interested in Hindu spirituality.

**SAN FRANCISCO:** Shamakami, the world's oldest surviving forum for South Asian lesbians and bisexual women, is now a registered nonprofit organization. Donations are tax deductible. Annual subscription \$15, P.O. Box 460456, San Francisco, CA 94146-0456, USA.

**SAN JOSE:** Trikone, P.O. Box 21354, San Jose, CA 95151-1354, USA. (408) 270-8776. e-mail: trikone@rahul.net. Web: <http://www.rahul.net/~trikone/>. For lesbians & gay men.

**WASHINGTON, DC:** Khush-DC, P.O. Box 53149, Temple Heights Stn, Washington, DC 20009. (202) 728-3870. For gays, lesbians, bisexuals.

## Safer Sex

**SAFER SEX:** Dry Kissing • Caressing • Massage • Hugging • Body rubbing • Masturbation using latex\* barriers

**POSSIBLY SAFER SEX:** Oral sex using latex barrier • Vaginal intercourse using latex barrier • Masturbation without using a latex barrier • Wet kissing

**RISKY SEX:** Oral sex without a latex barrier • Anal intercourse with condom with or without lubricant

**UNSAFE SEX:** Vaginal intercourse without latex barrier • Anal intercourse without condom • Oral sex without a latex barrier • Inserting bare fingers into anus or vagina • Oral/anal contact (rimming) • Sharing IV needles, enema, or douching equipment

\* Latex is a form of rubber from which condoms are made.

## Contacts

If you are a gay or lesbian South Asian and want to speak to someone, here are people who will be glad to talk to you. If you are new to an area, these contact persons can answer questions and possibly introduce you to others.

Contact persons are volunteers committed to protecting people's privacy. They are not at liberty to give out names and numbers.

You may ask if the local group meets, and if it is okay for you to attend.

This list is continually updated as people volunteer. If you are interested in becoming a contact person, drop us a note with your name, phone number, and mailing address (only your name and number will be listed).

## WOMEN

Only women may call women contact persons. No calls from men, please.

**ATLANTA:** ... Svati  
**AUCKLAND, NZ:** ... Uma  
**BERLIN:** ... Zari  
**CALGARY:** ... Amreen  
**CHICAGO:** ... Leema  
**LONDON:** ... Rana  
**LOS ANGELES:** ... Nahid  
**NEW DELHI:** ... Giti  
**OAKLAND:** ... Dipti  
**PHILADELPHIA:** ... Anjali  
**SAN FRANCISCO:** ... Dyanthe  
... Hima  
**SAN JOSE:** ... Minal  
**SYDNEY:** ... Poonam  
**VANCOUVER:** ... Azra  
**WASHINGTON:** ... Nusrat

## MEN

**AMSTERDAM:** ... Sundar  
**ATLANTA:** ... Mehboob  
**BALTIMORE:** ... Sharma  
**BANGALORE:** ... Mahesh  
**BERKELEY:** ... Tinku  
**BOMBAY:** ... Sopan  
**BOSTON:** ... Imtiaz  
... Kevin  
**CALGARY:** ... Kevin  
**CHICAGO:** ... Viru, Ifiti  
**COCOA BEACH, FL:** ... Raj  
**DALLAS:** ... Yogeesh  
**HAMBURG:** ... Kiran  
**LAS VEGAS:** ... Zulfikar  
**LONDON:** ... Shiva  
... Manjit  
**LOS ANGELES:** ... Nadeem  
**MADRAS:** ... Vijaya Rajan  
**MINNEAPOLIS:** ... Manzar

**NAGPUR:** ... Vijay  
**NEW DELHI:** ... Aalok  
... Chrysantha  
**NEW ORLEANS:** ... Chrysantha  
**NEW YORK:** ... Vinay  
**PASADENA:** ... Paresch  
**PHILADELPHIA:** ... Jayant  
... Kevin  
**PORTLAND:** ... Sandip  
**PROVIDENCE:** ... Nimish  
**SAN FRANCISCO:** ... Devesh  
... Rahul  
**SAN JOSE:** ... Arvind  
**ST LOUIS, MO:** ... Suren  
**SYDNEY:** ... Prasad  
**TORONTO:** ... Nelson  
**VANCOUVER:** ... Al-Qamar  
**VICTORIA:** ... Devan

## Resources

This information is provided as a service to readers. If your group's listing is missing or incorrect, let us know, and we will make the necessary changes. An up-to-date listing will make it easier for others to contact your group. Write: Trikone Resources, P.O. Box 21354, San Jose, CA 95151-1354, call (408) 270-8776, or send e-mail to [trikone@rahul.net](mailto:trikone@rahul.net).

### Groups

**INTERNET:** "Khush" is a worldwide electronic mail discussion list for gay and lesbian South Asians. To join, send e-mail to [trikone@rahul.net](mailto:trikone@rahul.net).

### AUSTRALIA

**POTTS POINT:** Hindustani Yaar, P.O. Box 1603, Potts Point, NSW 2011, Australia. Gay & lesbian Indian community.

### CANADA

**CALGARY:** Of Colour: Lesbians & Gay Men of Color and others, c/o Gay Lines Calgary, 201-223 12th Ave SW, Calgary, Alberta T2R 0G9.

Canada. Kevin (403) 234-8973.

**TORONTO:** Alliance for South Asian AIDS Prevention, 399 Church St, 3rd Floor, Toronto, Canada. (416) 351-0131.

**TORONTO:** Khush: South Asian Gay Men, P.O. Box 6172, Station A, Toronto, Ontario M5W 1P6, Canada. Khush Hotline (416) 925-XTRA ext 2173.

**VANCOUVER:** Atish Network Society for South Asian & Middle Eastern Lesbians, Bisexuals, and Gay Men. Al-Qamar (604) 528-9275 (men), Azra (604) 420-1344 (women). Languages spoken: Punjabi, Hindi, Urdu. Atish Network Society, Attn: Al-Qamar Sangha, Box 345-1027 Davie St, Vancouver, BC V6E 4L2, Canada. Phone/fax: (604) 528-9275.

**VANCOUVER:** Atish HIV/AIDS Project for South Asian & Iranian Ethnocultural Communities. Al-Qamar (604) 528-9275 (phone/fax), AIDS Vancouver Helpline (604) 687-2437. Atish Network Society, Attn: Al-Qamar Sangha, Box 345-1027 Davie St, Vancouver, BC V6E 4L2, Canada. Phone/fax: (604) 528-9275.

### INDIA

**BOMBAY:** Bombay Dost, 105A Veena Beena Shopping Centre, Opposite Bandra Station, Bandra (W), Bombay 400 050, India. For gay men and lesbians.

**CALCUTTA:** Counsel Club, c/o Pawan, Post Bag 10237, Calcutta 700 019, India. Annual membership of Rs 200/\$10 gets you Pravatark subscription, penpal listing, access to archives, counseling help. For gay men, lesbians, and bisexuals.

**COCHIN:** Nihhil, Men India Movement, Post Box 885, Cochin 682 005, India.

**DELHI:** Arambh Support Group, P.O. Box 9522, Delhi 110 095, India. For gay men and lesbians.

**DELHI:** Naz Project (India) Trust, Attn: Anjali Gopalan, D-45 Gulmohar Park, New Delhi 110 049, India. (11) 667-328. South Asian health organization.

**LUCKNOW:** Friends India, Post Box 59, Mahanagar, Lucknow 226 006, India. For men who love men.

**MADRAS:** Sisters, P.O. Box 26, Tambaram, Madras 600 059, India. For polycultural lesbians.

**NEW DELHI:** AIDS Bhedbhav Virodhi Andolan,

# Classifieds

SEND US YOUR LISTING EXACTLY AS YOU WANT IT TO APPEAR IN PRINT. We may edit listings. Please use your own mailing address or phone number in your listing. Remember, **Trikone Magazine** is COMPLETELY PUBLIC. If you are not comfortable about this, please do not send a listing. *Trikone* cannot be responsi-

ble for what happens as a result of people meeting people through *Trikone*.

**PAYMENT:** Classified ads are \$5 for the first 25 words, and 25¢ for each additional word. Readers living in South Asia and paid subscribers can place one personal ad in each issue for no charge.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

Calling the author of the article "Trikone—Seven out of Ten" submitted for *Trikone's* 10th Anniversary issue. Your name is missing. Please contact us immediately. Your name can be withheld or changed, if you wish. *Trikone* 10th Anniversary Issue. P.O. Box 21354, San Jose, CA 95151, USA.

## CALLS

The James White Review is publishing a special issue on Indian gays and lesbians. It invites submissions of fiction, essays, journals, poetry, and art. Individuals living in India are especially encouraged to submit. Vernacular works considered along with English translations. Typed MS. Include SASE. Renumeration: prose \$50, poetry and art work \$20. Deadline: January 1, 1996. JWLR, India issue, P.O. Box 3356, Traffic Station, Minneapolis, MN 55403, USA.

Shamakami invites stories, papers, opinions, cartoons, poems or artwork for a "Coming Out" issue. e-mail: nretina@capaccess.org or kamm@ccs.neu.edu. Shamakami, P.O. Box 460456, San Francisco, CA 94146-0456. Deadline: October 30. Also looking for volunteers to do layouts, answer correspondence, and other publishing activities.

Seeking submissions for anthology of writing (fiction, poetry, letters, interviews) and photographs/movie stills on lesbian love. Send with SASE and 4-line bio. Beatrix Gates, P.O. Box 28, Greenport, NY 11944.

Seeking donations of new and second-hand books (fiction and non-fiction) on sexualities, HIV/AIDS, lesbian/gay issues for lesbian/gay groups in South Asia. Please send to The Naz Project: Books Project, Palingswick House, 241 King St, London, W6 9LP, UK.

## CANADA

INDIAN FEMALE, middle 20s, would love to network with other attractive and intelligent lesbians from anywhere. Zach [redacted] Canada.

PROFESSIONAL INDIAN MALE, 34, broadminded, honest, seeks Indian or North American men as pen-friends or for mutual visits. Write Box # 403, 1400 Bathurst St. Toronto, Ontario, M5R 3S5, Canada.

## HELP WANTED

South Asian Advisory Taskforce on Health, Los Angeles, seeks a full-time South Asian community health outreach worker to provide HIV education and prevention services for the South Asian community in Los Angeles. \$24,000/year plus benefits. Tri-kone-LA (213) 993-7626.

Narika, a non-profit organization for and of South Asian women, seeks a part-time office/fund-raising coordinator (15-18 hrs/wk, \$12/hr), community organizer (18 hrs/wk, \$12/hr). Send resume, cover letter, writing sample to: Search Committee, Narika, P.O. Box 7326, Berkeley, CA 94707.

Institute for Global Communications has positions open for Network Operations Specialist, WWW/Database Specialist, Network Operations Intern, Internet Site Support Tech, Accounting Assistant, Marketing Director. Send resume to IGC, 18 de Boom St, San Francisco, CA 94107, hire@igc.apc.org, fax (415) 546-1794.

1 OR 2 SINGLE PERSONS for motel desk positions. Lodging included. Seasonal or all-year. Call Mark at (916) 544-6459 or (916) 542-3536 9am-5pm.

## INDIA

HONEST SINCERE SIMPLE-MINDED ENGINEER, 34, 5'8", 64lbs, invites correspondence from broadminded persons willing to visit India/Calcutta. Contact: Maocian Bana [redacted] India.

SINGLE SINDHI MALE, 32 tall good-looking businessman wants close honest lifelong relationship with a man. Age no bar. Write with photo to P.M. Post Box No. 11971, Azad Nagar P.O., Andheri (W) Bombay - 53.

YOUNG CHARMING SEXY guy, 20, handsome, hairy body with strong

physique would like to correspond with guys who are soft-natured, goodlooking, caring and around the age 18-35. Write: Vishnu, P.B. No: 4213, SRKV Post Office, Coimbatore 641020, India.

MUSCULAR BUSINESSMAN IN NAGPUR, 38, fair, nicely endowed, interested in religion and politics and fine arts and journalism seeks friends. I travel a lot on my business of minerals and metals and would like to meet people from all walks of life. Write Vijay [redacted] P.B. No: 228, Patwardhan Ground Post Office, Dhantoli, Nagpur 440012, Maharashtra, India.

BANGALORE ONLY. American NRI, often in India, needs a capable book-keeper/PA parttime. Good salary. NO SEX. Nonsmoker only. Apply with CV to [redacted] USA, or Fax USA.

GAY MAN IN SAHARANPUR would like to meet strong men. Free hospitality for groups. Especially interested in books, magazines, and video cassettes. India visitors welcome. Direct address available after the first letter. Write to PO Box 181, Saharanpur, U.P. 247001 India.

AFFECTIONATE WELL-BUILT GAY MAN, 42, 177 cms, 75 kgs, wants to have close contacts with strong gentlemen age 50-65. Write with photo to S. Vijaya [redacted] P.O. Box 3202, Madras 600 052, India.

## INDONESIA

INDONESIAN GAY MAN would like to hear from gay men from around the world. I will reply all letters. Please write to Handoko [redacted] Indonesia.

INDONESIAN MAN SEEKS LOVE: 26yo, 180 cm, 72 kg, attractive and romantic, interested in art, music, modeling, and films seeks LTR with handsome macho American Caucasian blonde gay man, 26-35, 180-190 cms, 80-90 kgs, who is mature physically, professionally, and emotionally. Write with photo to [redacted] Indonesia.

## SINGAPORE

STRAIGHT ACTING PROFESSIONAL MALE, 42 yo, seeks sincere male for friendship and correspondence. Please write to Paul T., Yishun Central, P.O. Box 95, Singapore 9176 or e-mail to: [redacted]

## SOUTH KOREA

SEEKING PENPALS! 24-year-old American boy with South European looks, 5'9", 150 lbs, wants to correspond with gay South Asian males. Write in Hindi or English; I'm familiar with Hindi and Indian culture. All letters replied. Write: Matthew [redacted] Kwangju City, South Korea

## SRI LANKA

GAY SRI LANKAN MALE SEEKS CORRESPONDENCE from HIV-American, Canadian, or European body builder type men. Write: Sanju Hewagama, T.T.A., China-bay, Sri Lanka 95.06.08.

## UAE

INDIAN MAN IN SHARJAH SEEKS FRIENDS. I'm 30, 157cms, 67kg, college graduate, hairy, effeminate, passive. I'm looking for active, handsome, hairy men older than 25. Please write Sanjay Suvama, The

Baby Shop LLC, PO Box 4862, Sharjah, UAE.

## USA

INDIAN SEEKS LONG TERM RELATIONSHIP. 30, 5'11", 170lbs, dark hair and eyes, good looking, loving, caring, registered nurse, invites correspondence from professionals between 19 and 38 for sincere relationship. Would you like me to be your nurse forever? If you love Indian music, culture and food, reply with photo and phone number to Resident, 161 Country Club Dr. Apt #22, South San Francisco, CA 94080.

OLD-FASHIONED, ONE-MAN RELATIONSHIP—'a dream lover' wanted by a successful Indian male. Mid 30s, 5'9", 175#. Interested? Write to: Steve [redacted] Brooklyn NY 11239.

SHY BENGALI MUSLIM MAN, 30, 5'8", 145 lbs, dark, slim, old-fashioned, humorous, kind, romantic and sincere, seeks caring and mature man 38-50, kind-hearted, and interested in a relationship. Race unimportant. I like the beach, travelling, movies, swimming, cooking, and eating out. Call Hussain [redacted] or write c/o Bob [redacted] Los Angeles, CA 90029. Photo and letter appreciated.

FEMININE HISPANIC FEMALE, 21, seeks feminine females from Asian

descent for friendship (discreet). Age unimportant. No butches. Please write to P.O. Box 17163, Oakland, CA 94601.

LOOKING FOR FRIENDSHIP, HAPPINESS, AND POSSIBLY MORE. 21 year old Indian pre-med seeks an intelligent man with love for life. My interests include hiking, basketball, economics, and politics. Please write to P.O.Box 2331, Providence, RI 02912.

GOODLOOKING GWM 33, 6'2", 165 lbs, blue-eyed blonde, sincere, honest, and loving seeks gay South Asian male, mature and secure in his sexuality, for serious, monogamous LTR. Must live in the NY tri-state area. 25+ old. Send photo, will return. Pennals welcome. Write: Bernard [redacted] Brooklyn NY 11239.

VERY ATTRACTIVE PERSIAN DYKE, slim, voluptuous, mid 30s, 5'8", looking for correspondence with other lesbians around the world, regardless of color and culture. Please write: Sehar [redacted] P.O. Box 7411, Torrance, CA 90504, USA.

Graduate student at San Francisco State University doing a thesis on Asian lesbians wants to interview South Asian lesbians in a video format. If you can help, call Lisa [redacted] after 8pm.

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# Malaysian Pink

By JULIAN JAYASEELAN

**P**ink Triangle Malaysia has its origins seven years ago when a group of concerned men and women came together. (The "initiators" were mainly middle class, "gay identified" men who had been abroad.) They sensed a need for a support network that would assist gays in dealing with their sexuality, were worried about how AIDS was affecting their community, and wanted to pursue a more positive environment for homosexuals in Kuala Lumpur. ...

With AIDS on the agenda, Pink Triangle was torn between its gay community development agenda—serving a community which was desperate in its need for strength and self-esteem—and doing AIDS work which meant working with society at large which was demanding information and resources in the fight against AIDS.

In 1990, three years after its formation, Pink Triangle went public. Talks, discussions, and workshops in schools, companies, and hospitals increased. Sensing a need for a concerted effort in dealing with the epidemic, Pink Triangle lobbied for the development of the Malaysian Council of NGOs on AIDS. Public campaigns at Central Market, a popular cultural and shopping mall, during World AIDS Day saw condom distribution for the first time.

Clear information materials were developed for general audiences. Outreach work and a drop-in center for IVDUs and sex workers began. It was the first time these communities were receiving information about condom quality and safe sex negotiation. The strategy, although unexpressed, was to present a non-gay front, to be accepted as a responsible AIDS organization genuinely concerned about the epidemic. ...

There was also the very justifiable belief that Pink Triangle would not survive as

merely a gay organization. Social and political recognition obtained due to the AIDS programs would ensure no political backlash and continued funding.

The press reports on Pink Triangle regularly, gliding over the fact that it is a gay organization, focusing on the HIV/AIDS awareness and care programs. The organization is undoubtedly the leading AIDS NGO in the country, working with various communities on the street, forging a more positive response to AIDS by networking and carrying out joint actions with other NGOs, the media, the medical and legal profession, and the corporate sector.

Pink Triangle was being recognized and accepted. However very little was being undertaken with the gay community. ...

A study done in 1992 among men who have sex with men in Kuala Lumpur showed that only 35.7 percent had heard of Pink Triangle, almost all of them middle-class gay men. When asked, "Have you heard of HIV or AIDS?" 28 percent of gay youth answered, "No." ...

Pink Triangle's role in educating the gay community is important because it is the only body able to reach the gay community with information that is effective. In this context, moving resources away from the gay community seems almost like a betrayal. But it is also a question of acceptability. Not only from the wider society but also from within the gay community. A society hostile towards homosexuals prevents gays from any expression of their sexuality, including getting involved with an organization that is "too gay."

In a discussion to assess the needs of the community, a group of gay men were asked to prioritize the kind of activities they would like Pink Triangle to work on. HIV/AIDS information and support came low on the list. The more important was to link with media and government ministries to foster social acceptance of gays and to work with families for a better understanding of homosexual youth. ▼

*Julian Jayaseelan is the Executive Director of Pink Triangle. This is excerpted from an article which appeared in the Journal of SID this year.*

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